DANCE EDUCATION develops the knowledge and skills required to create, perform and understand movement as a means of artistic communication. A comprehensive education includes improvisation, technique, choreography performance, observation and analysis. Exposure to dance history and cultures, kinesthetics and anatomy, and movement theories further enriches the dance educational experience.

Defined by the National Dance Education Organization.

ARTS INTEGRATION is an approach to learning in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both.

Defined by the Kennedy Center.

For this Special Report, the Arts Education Partnership reviewed research studies identified within ArtsEdSearch—the national clearinghouse of arts education research—to explore the importance of dance education from early childhood through adulthood and build lasting connections to culture and community. Despite these benefits, 13% of public secondary schools nationwide offered formal dance instruction in the 2008-09 school year.

DANCE COUNTS provides powerful opportunities for students to create, perform and understand movement as a means of artistic communication. Dance education impacts student safety, and long-term learning experiences and can play a significant role in their personal and academic growth. The benefits of dance extend from early childhood through adulthood and build lasting connections to culture and community. Despite these benefits, 13% of public secondary schools nationwide offered formal dance instruction in the 2008-09 school year.

DANCE EDUCATION Partnership appreciates the generous support from the Hewlett Foundation for the preparation of this Special Report. AEP shares the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) for serving as reviewers, and National Dance Institute-New Mexico and NDEO for sharing photographs for this publication. This report is the third in AEP’s “Arts Matter” series describing the researched benefits of arts education. In positive student success and support findings that dance education:

• Promotes early development of language, literacy, and social and motor skills.
• Supports positive academic and personal growth, which can build a sense of identity and personal agency.
• Builds relationships and connections to community and cultural heritage.

ABOUT THE ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The Arts Education Partnership has been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education since 1995 and is administered by Education Commission of the States. AEP maintains ArtsEdSearch. Arts and dance education specialists vetted all studies cited in this brief, and all studies can be found in ArtsEdSearch.

DANCE EDUCATION Partnership • The Kennedy Center
Early Development of Language, Literacy, and Social and Motor Skills

Dance education can support young children’s acquisition of language and literacy as well as their social and physical development through movement and repetition. These skills are foundational for a child’s future academic and personal success.

Strengths in Early Language and Literacy

Early childhood dance education that uses an arts integration approach can improve students’ performance in reading, writing, and spelling through dance experiences. One study found that preschool children showed significant improvements with participating in an eight-week dance program, a group of influences that potentially impact a child’s physical development. For instance, after participating in dance education programs who received movement instruction made notable gains in language development.

Boosts Social and Emotional Development

Developing socially aware, self-directed, and self-regulated learners plays a significant role in cultivating lifelong social skills. Dance education can improve students’ behavioral health and social competence. For example, Head Start students who participated in a creative dance/movement program exhibited decreased aggression and anxiety when compared to students who did not participate.

Sharpens Motor Skills

Engaging in dance education programming during early childhood positively influences a child’s physical development. For instance, after participating in an eight-week dance program, a group of 5-year-old children showed significant improvements with participating in an eight-week dance program, a group of influences that potentially impact a child’s physical development. For instance, after participating in dance education programs who received movement instruction made notable gains in language development.

Sense of Identity and Personal Agency

Dance education encourages creativity, accountability, academic accomplishments, and personal agency — a sense of influence over one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. These outcomes benefit all youth, and youth from racial or economic backgrounds can especially benefit from the supports and opportunities that dance education can provide.

Facilitates Academic and Personal Accomplishments

Dance education can support the inclusion and engagement of students with autism in classrooms. In addition to dance instruction, dance therapy can be an important addition to a positive learning environment.

Dance Therapy

Dance therapy is distinct from dance education and is a recognized form of therapy to assist individuals with behavioral, cognitive, physical, and social integration. For more information about dance therapy, visit www.ndta.org

Enhances Creativity, Agency and Identity

Dance instruction improves creative thinking and problem-solving. This skill set can translate to academic achievement and develop a sense of agency and identity that lasts well beyond adolescence. The personal satisfaction derived from working hard and collaborating with others improves young people’s influence over their own thoughts, actions, and feelings. It also fosters resiliency, a key skill that people develop when they face new or unexpected challenges.

Researchers who studied an after-school arts program serving students from low-income neighborhoods found that dance instruction translated into gains in academic skills. Researchers found that dance instruction translated into gains in academic skills.

Community dance experiences encourage intergenerational connection to community. These dance experiences affording opportunities for learning about self and one’s connection to the community they call home.

Relationships and Connection with Community and Cultural Heritage

Community dance programming can create community pride in a group of young people by encouraging a positive understanding of others and one’s connection to the community they call home.

Cultivates Positive Community Learning and a Supportive Environment

Community dance programming can create community pride in a group of young people by encouraging a positive understanding of others and one’s connection to the community they call home.

Forces Cultural Connections

Community dance programming can create community pride in a group of young people by encouraging a positive understanding of others and one’s connection to the community they call home.

Dance education for all" — a view supported by a growing body of evidence that encourages positive relationship building, adaptability, curiosity and civic engagement.

In another study, researchers found that community programming that included dance fostered a desire within teens to be more involved in their communities beyond the dance experience.

Across cultures and nationalities, community-based dance programming for youths can heighten connection and pride to the world around them. One study suggests that community-led dance programming for tweens — particularly for youths in historically marginalized communities — builds a broader base of support that encourages positive relationship building, adaptability, curiosity and civic engagement. In another study, researchers found that community programming that included dance fostered a desire within teens to be more involved in their communities beyond the dance experience.